



*Communications
Workers of America*

*The Connecticut Union
of
Telephone Workers, Inc.*



Local 1298

AFL-CIO

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Testimony of William F. Henderson III
President, Local 1298
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Supporting Proposed Bill: HB 6446

General Law Committee
March 2011

Senator Doyle, Representative Taborsak, members of the committee: my name is William Henderson III. I am proud to serve as the President of Communications Workers of America Local 1298, representing more than 5,000 telecommunications workers across New England.

I am here to speak in favor of HB 6446 – AN ACT CONCERNING REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS OF PUBLIC SERVICE TECHNICIANS AND CERTIFIED COMPETITIVE VIDEO SERVICE PROVIDERS.

This is crucial legislation that is important for Connecticut consumer's safety, Connecticut's economy, and for the hard-working professionals I represent in CWA Local 1298.

The stated purpose of HB 6446 is "To protect the public by requiring the registration of all public service technicians who provide telecommunications and video services to customers in their homes."

Let me explain three reasons this requirement is so important.

1. First, the issue of safety. Presently, direct employees of telecommunications and video service providers in the state of Connecticut are required to hold a Public Services Technician license (PST). Contractors hired by these companies, in many cases "fly-by night" workers, are not required to be licensed at all.

Why does this matter?

This means that the person doing the installation in our homes, or office buildings, or public schools, could be literally "just about anyone – with little or no training." The removable magnetic sign on the side of their truck or the logo

on their shirt in no way is a guarantee that the so called "technician" holds a Public Services Technician license or has any significant training at all.

2. Connecticut's unemployment rate is 9%. Many of the contracted workers used by Connecticut's telecommunications and video service providers are from out of state. This lack of uniform licensing creates a disadvantage for conscientious Connecticut employers and properly certified workers, at a time when jobs are scarce.
3. Companies should not be allowed to shift work to contractors in order to avoid state licensing requirements. With every contractor not required to meet the licensing requirements -- the State of Connecticut loses the license fee revenue.

The bottom line is that the current regulations lead to an uneven playing field that creates an incentive for companies to use unlicensed personnel rather than certified technicians, if only to avoid the licensing fees. This hurts consumers, and unfairly penalizes skilled professionals like the members of CWA Local 1298, who I represent.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions, and to work with the committee to see that this important legislation becomes law. I urge you to support Connecticut workers and their families, and Connecticut consumers, whose safety is our most important concern.